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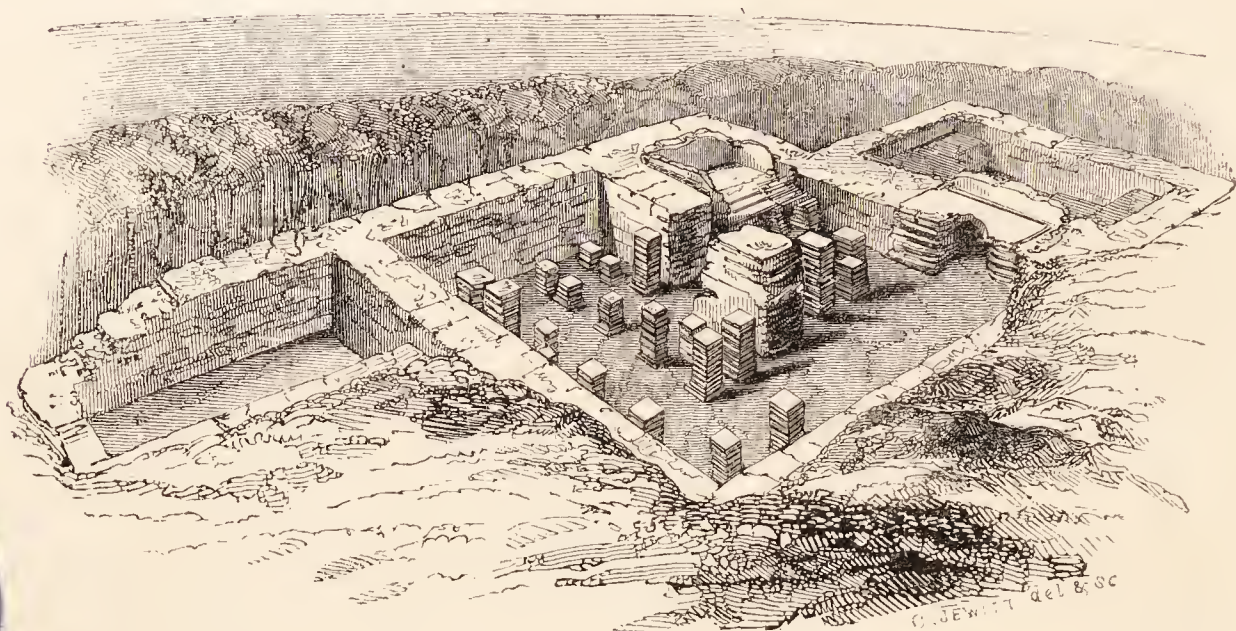


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Lm. Bromet

## NOTICE OF A ROMAN VILLA RECENTLY DISCOVERED AT WHEATLEY, NEAR OXFORD.



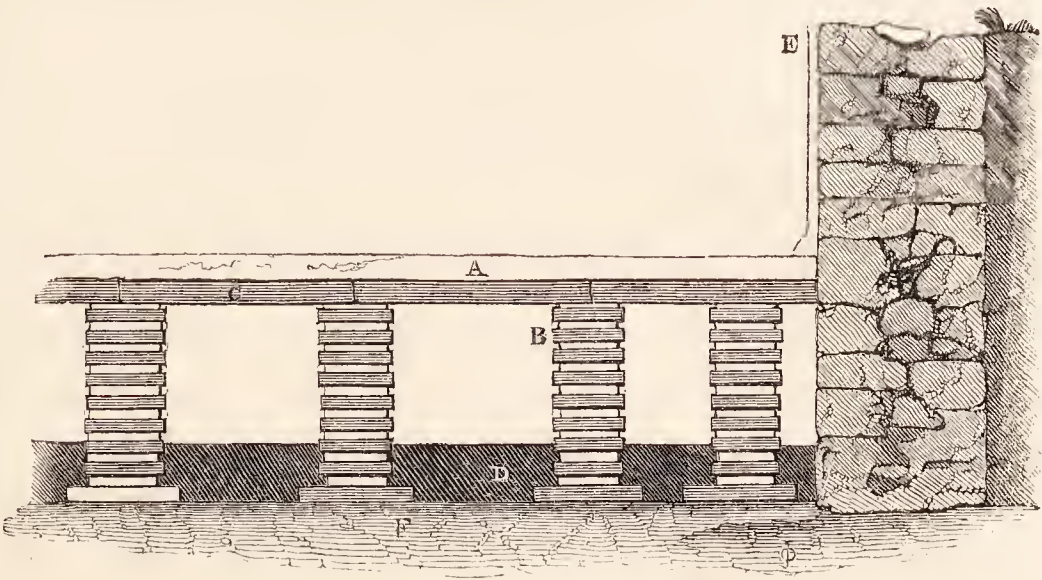
General View.

INDICATIONS of a Roman villa having been recently discovered in a field called Castle-hill, between Wheatley and Cuddesden, near Oxford, Dr. Bromet proceeded thither on the 31st of October, accompanied by Mr. J. H. Parker and Mr. W. Sanders, (master of the Wheatley National School,) with Mr. Orlando Jewitt as their draughtsman, and some labourers belonging to Mr. Orpwood, tenant of the field, who had laudably interested himself in saving from destruction those parts of it most worthy of preservation.

Having first laid bare some rough walling 2 ft. thick, which enclosed a quadrangular space measuring internally 14 ft. by 12, they by careful digging exposed the inner face of the western wall, where, at a depth of 2 ft. from the surface, they arrived at an ovolo base moulding, and a plaster floor  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 in. thick, composed of lime, sand, and broken brick. It was situated over the entrance to a furnace from the pre-furnium described hereafter. On clearing away the earth in the north-east angle, they found that this plaster floor had been laid on solid flat tiles 2 ft. square by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  in. thick, the whole being supported by uniform and regularly disposed pillars, about 1 ft. 10 in. high, built up of flat tiles 7 in. square by  $1\frac{1}{4}$  thick. set in beds of mortar  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch thick—the lowest or plinth tiles being about 11 in. square, and laid on a natural

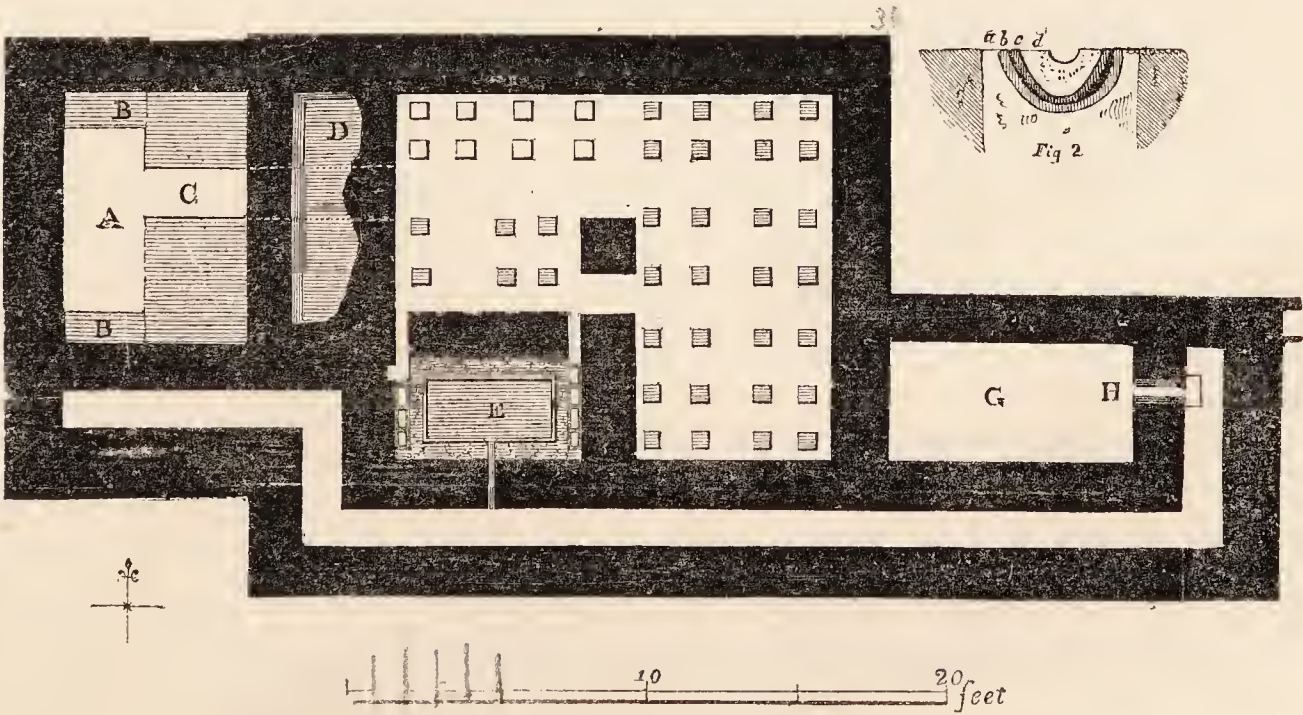


bed of yellow sand. These pillars were distant from each other about 16 or 18 inches, but the upper portions of the intervals were filled with earth, and the lower part with a stratum about 6 inches thick of soot and ashes lying on the sand-bed beforementioned, under which they feared to dig, lest they might injure the stability of the pillars. Here and there among the earth between these pillars (earth which had probably been laid there soon after the demolition of the villa) were found fragments of coarse pottery, and pieces of stucco, painted red, yellow, green, and black, but not sufficiently large to shew their patterns. The greater number of the lines on the stucco are straight, the others are curved and waved.



Section of Hypocaust.

- A. Floor of Plaster
- B. Piers built of tiles and mortar  $7\frac{1}{2}$  in. square standing on tiles 11 in square
- D. Black sooty matter.
- E. Stucco.
- F. Sand.



Plan of the Hypocaust.

- A. Prefurnium ; B. Raised Stone Seats ; C. Entrance to the Furnace ; D. Remains of a Cistern or Bath
- F. Leaden Pipe for drawing off the water ; G. Bath ; H. Drain for carrying off the water.

Fig. 2.—Section of Drain at H; *a*. White coarse mortar; *b*. Outer Draining Tile; *c*. Inner Draining Tile of finer quality than the outer; between the two is an open space; *d*. Fine red mortar, in which is a passage for the water

The fire-place which was used for heating this hypocaust is an opening from the prefurnium through the western wall, about 3 ft. high, built of brick, and covered with large 2 ft. square tiles like those before noticed, placed on different levels, the highest being outermost. Under this cover were found coarse ashes and many bits of charred wood.

Adjoining to the south-eastern part of the calidarium (the chamber above the hypocaust), but lower than its floor, is a rectangular enclosure, 8 ft. by 4, which was no doubt a bath, its waste-water gutter still remaining in the eastern wall. This gutter was formed of two concave tiles, one within the other, set firmly in cement, so as to render it efficient.

About 116 ft. further north<sup>a</sup>, they uncovered the south-western angle of another portion of the villa; but nothing was found there except a few fragments of fine pottery, and the foundations of other walls.

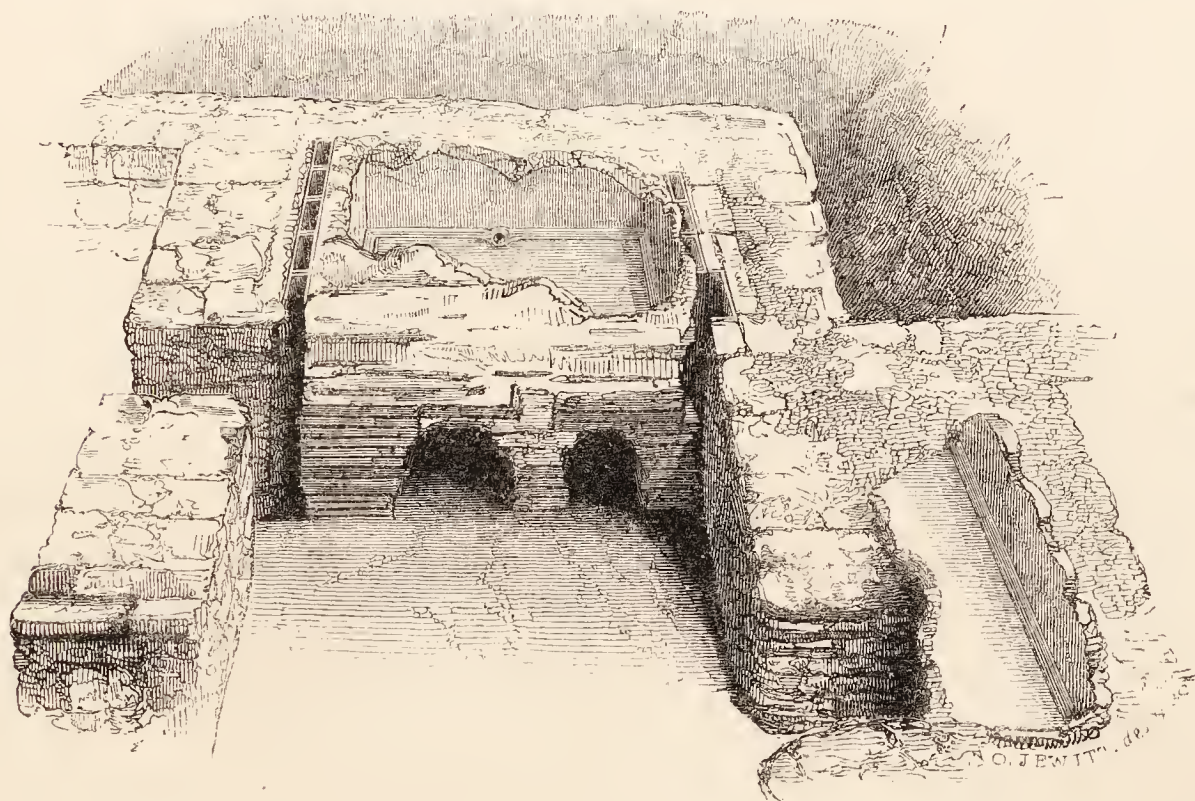
Several tiles of various forms were likewise found, though few were sufficiently *in situ* to shew what their destination had been. Those of concave form are probably remains of a roof, and a few blackened with smoke are portions of wall-flues. Some of these, and other flat tiles, have on one side (as if drawn with a comb-like instrument) various patterns scrawled in straight and curved lines intersecting one another; these lines, though not inelegant, were probably intended to make the mortar more adhesive to them. Remains of instruments and nails of iron, and several bones of oxen, deer, sheep, and hogs, were also found with the shells of common garden-snails, *helix aspersa*, which were probably eaten, like the *helix pomatia*; and oyster-shells like those found at many Roman stations in the centre of England, e. g., in a Roman camp near Northampton, and a Roman station at Aldworth, near Wallingford.

The excavations were continued by the Bishop of Oxford, with Dr. Buckland and Mr. Parker, on a subsequent day, when a cistern or boiler (measuring  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ft. by  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ) was found over the south-west angle of the hypocaust. This boiler *or cistern* had the lower part of its floor and some height of the sides perfect, with the same moulding at the angle

<sup>a</sup> In the space between the hypocaust and another room, since discovered, 29 ft. north of it, another stratum of "sooty matter" was found at the same depth as in the

hypocaust, resting upon the "natural sand bed," whence we infer that the villa was destroyed by fire.

as the one first discovered. It was lined inside with fine stucco or plaster,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. thick, and outside this were 2 inches of mortar. It rested on large tiles like those before mentioned, supported by pillars of smaller tiles similar to those before described, but not at such regular intervals. Further heat from the furnace was communicated to this boiler by rows of vertical flue-tiles or pipes, behind the stucco of its sides, these are quadrangular, and measure 8 in. by  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , they are smooth and blackened with soot in the inside, but scored on the outside to make them adhere to the mortar. Many of these are entire, and remain *in situ*. On the south side a leaden pipe, quite perfect, passes from the bottom of this cistern through the outer wall. This pipe probably conducted the hot water to the bath at the



Cistern for heating water, with the Fireplace and Flues.

east end of the calidarium. The boiler had its stucco lining more perfect than the bath at the south-east end of the hypocaust.

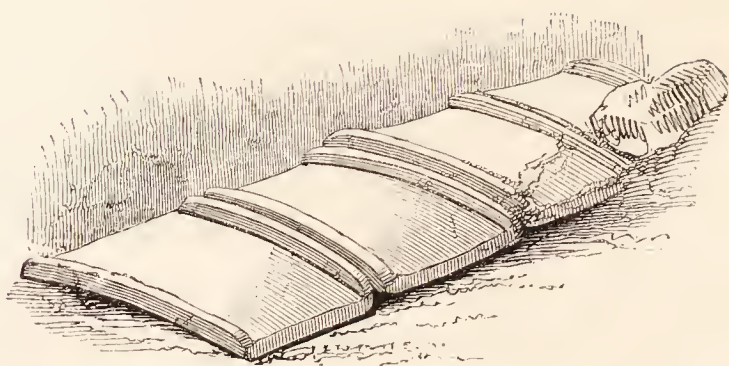
Dr. Buckland having applied to T. Grove, Esq., of Ferns, near Shaftesbury, the proprietor of the land, for permission to preserve these interesting remains, which are within an hour's walk of Oxford, this gentleman immediately authorized him to do

whatever he thought proper for their protection, and they are already covered by a building adequate to guard them for a century.

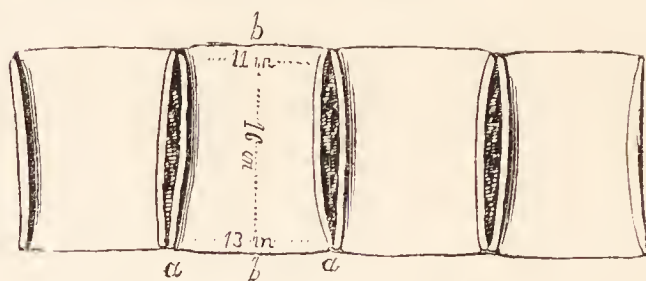
Under the foundation of a narrow wall at a few feet distant from a larger wall was a layer of dovetail shaped tiles, in length 16 in., and 13 in. wide at the larger and 11 in. at the smaller extremity, with a flange or raised margin on each side about 1 in. high and 1 in. broad. They were laid on the natural bed of sand, with their broad and narrow ends alternating in a continuous line, and placed transversely under the thickness of the wall. Their edges were bedded in coarse mortar, containing narrow stones set edge-wise; and upon their surface were small stones and mortar, forming the foundation of a narrow wall.

Dr. Buckland found similar flanged tiles used for the same purpose in the Roman villa at Preston, near Weymouth, described by him in the proceedings of the Ashmolean Society, Nov. 1844; but these were laid on a natural bed of clay, and their sides were parallel, not dove-tailed; and instead of being set transversely to the line of the wall, the flanged sides of the tiles were placed parallel to it, so that when it was first discovered the workmen exclaimed they had found a fossil railway. In both these cases the use of the marginal flanges was probably to retain the mortar from being squeezed out while wet, and to save materials.

No sufficient indications of the general plan of the Wheatley villa have yet been found, but the bath and hypocaust shew it to have been a luxurious mansion, which was probably burnt on the retreat of the Romans, and the areas between the walls more or less overcast with rubbish; and this rubbish subsequently strewed over with earth for cultivation. The nearness to the surface of some foundations of the walls



Foundation Tiles, in situ.



Foundation Tiles, Plan, and Sections.

caused them to be laid bare by the plough, and indicated to the farmer, Mr. Orpwood, a cheaper store of draining stones than he could dig from the contiguous quarries. In conformity with the desire of Mr. Grove, the proprietor, nothing more will be removed that is worthy of preservation.

Among the fragments of pottery and tiles, Dr. Buckland recognised several pieces of black cellular lava, containing in some of its cells small crystals of the blue mineral *Hauine*: these must have come from the mill-stone quarries in the lava of Nieder-Mynich, five miles west of the Rhine, near Andernach, from which large mill-stones are now sent to England and all parts of the world, and from whence also the Romans might have brought their mill-stones (probably hand-mills), to the villa at Wheatley. The fragments yet found are less than 6 in. in diameter, and one of them has a flat worn surface on one side. Among the loose stones Dr. Buckland has also found, and deposited, with the fragments of mill-stone, in the Oxford Museum, a fragment of a grind-stone, which the curve on its margin shews to have been about 3 in. thick and nearly 3 ft. in diameter, and which is made not like our modern grind-stones, of sand-stone grit from the coal formation at Newcastle, but of red grit from the new red sand-stone. Whether the Romans got this stone from the red rocks on the Rhine near Heidelberg, or from the red sand-stone of Staffordshire, is uncertain. This curious fragment of a broken grind-stone appears to have been applied to a further secondary service as a whet-stone, by which both its sides have been so deeply worn that two-thirds of its thickness in its primary state of grind-stone, have been rubbed away. This economical use of the fragments of a broken grind-stone, shews that stones fit for whet-stones and grind-stones, as well as mill-stones, were costly articles, which then, as now, were only to be obtained in regions far distant from Oxfordshire<sup>b</sup>.

This villa, which may be called the Wheatley villa, is situated on the south-eastern slope of an eminence about three furlongs from the river Thame, and about ten from the Roman road between Aelia Castra (Bicester), and Dorocina (Dorchester); and seems to have been an edifice of considerable extent.

<sup>b</sup> Similar grind-stones and whet-stones have not been duly noticed among the remains of other Roman villas, but they will

probably be recognised in many of them as soon as antiquaries shall justly appreciate the value of Mineralogy and Geology.

The most remarkable fragments discovered have been collected by Mr. Sanders, and arranged in the National School House at Wheatley. The coins found are as follows :—

MAXIMIANVS . NOB . CAES. Head of Maximianus, to the right; laureate; armour on shoulders.

—— GENIO . POPVLI . ROMANI. Figure, to the left; in right hand cornucopiæ, and in the left a patera. (2nd brass.)

SALONINA . AVG. Bust of Salonina, to right, on crescent.

—— PVDICITIA. Female, seated to left. (3rd brass.)

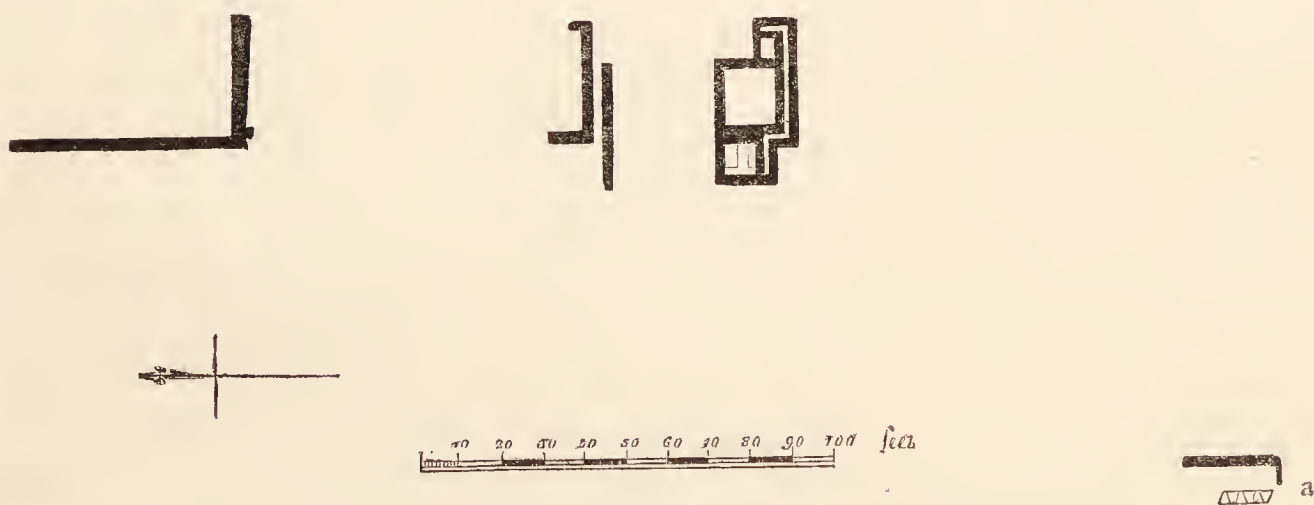
IMP . CONSTANTINVS . AVG. Head of Constantine helmeted, to left; in the right hand a hand spear resting on his left shoulder.

—— VICTORIA . . . . . Two victories supporting a shield, on which XII is inscribed. (3rd brass.)

D . N . GRATIANVS . AVG . NOB. Head of Gratianus, to right, diademed.

—— GLORIA . EX . . . . . Emperor standing, to left; in his right hand a spear, surmounted by a Christian monogram; at his side, a shield; below, TEC. (3rd brass.)

Another coin was discovered, which is illegible, but appears to be of the period of Constantine; also a large brass coin, which had been hammered into a shapeless mass. W. B.



General Plan. by Mr. Sanders, shewing all the remains at present discovered

a The Foundation Tiles.































































































